

FORUM

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SIXPENCE

CLASS STRUGGLE & THE S.P.G.B.

The Men Who Couldn't Quite

We have always been ready to tell our audiences that, whether they like it or not, there is a class struggle going on and that they are in the thick of it—either as workers or capitalists, or whatever they are pleased to call themselves. In order to make the position clear (at least to ourselves) we have insisted that they fall into the categories that we have drawn up—again whether they like it or not. This article is an attempt to show that the SPGB, as a Party of propagandists who are trying to enlist the aid of the whole of mankind to change the basis of present society, should in its propaganda *not* participate in this class struggle.

It would seem that a myth has been nurtured within our ranks that, because the SPGB is composed of workers, our attitude should be one of the so-called Left Wing type. Let it be said that the SPGB is opposed to the capitalist class and there is no comment forthcoming. But let it be even hinted that we are also opposed to the working class—what then!

Why should this be so? Are we not seeking a new society? Do we not make the most critical indictment of the present one? Do we not deplore the fact that class struggle is inevitable under Capitalism and desire to end it? Why, then, do we insist in our propaganda that we represent the *true interests* of the workers as a class?

It is patently clear that the true interests of anybody within Capitalism are to acquire property. To disdain this first law of capitalist society is to ignore the very struggle for existence and privilege, since everyone must accept, willingly or not, the terms of reference with which the whole of society is aligned. The man in the street, to whom we address ourselves, prosecutes this struggle daily—so must we all. But to advocate a new society, a classless society, and then to foster a leaning towards one of the classes in the present one is, to say the least, rather absurd.

There is no gainsaying that we must, *as workers*, engage in the class struggle—but what has that to do with our propaganda as a Party? Socialism is in the interest of everyone; we have said it again and again. If the wording of our Object—“by and in the interest of the whole community”—does not make it clear, then in “Questions of the Day” we state (p. 9) that “social affairs of all kinds will be administered with the full participation of all *for the mutual benefit of all*.” But maybe these things are not so apparent in our spoken word.

What is it that leads the newcomer to our case to confuse us with the Communist Party? What is it that makes the new listener suspect us of “sour grapes”? And, what is more important, what is it that often makes a speaker say he is a socialist because he “is not a member of the capitalist class,” or “if I were a capitalist I should behave and think as such, but, being a worker, I behave and think thus . . .”?

This may have a great effect on a member or sympathiser of the Communist Party, but I suggest that it is not the stuff that makes socialists. For us, the class struggle belongs to Capitalism, and the immediate job is to convince people of the benefits of Socialism, the need to assist in propagating the idea of it, and hence its eventual establishment.

Does our propaganda at present achieve this response from people? The record of our activities shows that it does not.

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The reason is perhaps to be found in the history of the Party and the lines upon which the Declaration of Principles decides it shall run. And—a very important factor—the interpretation which is placed on these principles. It is often said that they are explicit and that whenever we refer to them we shall find a sure guide. Unhappily, they are very often recoursed to in order to justify some action, not to facil-

tate the establishment of Socialism, but to grind a working class axe. Indeed, it would seem at times that the D. of P. is taken as something apart from our Object instead of in conjunction with it.

Because there are two classes in society and we must all belong to one or the other, it does not follow that we must speak in a manner that, by implication, excludes one or the other from understanding and agreeing with our ideas. Certainly the workers represent the large majority of people in the leading capitalist countries; certainly we shall address mainly workers. But if a note of exclusion is allowed to enter into our deliberations it will, if permitted to go unchecked, taint the whole of what we wish to say. Remember that the society we desire excludes nobody. It is too easy to detect in our propaganda that, far from advocating Socialism, the SPGB is the Champion of Working Class Interests, the custodians of Working Class Future, and the only real hater of the capitalist class. Yet only the latter statement is a correct one—and even that is only half the picture. The SPGB is the only real hater of *all classes*.

* * *

We have, during the past few years, been witnessing a lively controversy within the Party about why we do not get down to the task of formulating a general statement in reply to the question “What will Socialism be like?” Why has this controversy come about? The two warring factions in the matter are those who want to say what it *will* be like (and who seek the sanction of the membership to speak and write accordingly) and those who consider that to deal with Socialism as a concrete subject would be something akin to fortune-telling and (horror of horrors) “unscientific.”

But, in this striving to do everything according to the book of rules, it seems that we can at times be very unscientific. So it would not be out of place to consider what we mean when we say we are “scientific socialists.”

What do we say and do, and what have we said and done in the past, that can be said to be scientific? Have we made any great discoveries in social science? That much hard work has been done there can be no doubt. But to what purpose?

Our sole aim is to arouse support and desire for socialism, and yet our efforts, at every turn, have been bent on a castigation of the present condition of human society, which, whilst our labours have been monumental, has been done in excellent style elsewhere and previously, and prior to Karl Marx. On every hand we can, and do, quote reliable authorities—indeed, we should be quite lost without them. But what of our objective?

Very often we have set out to give a scientific exposition of modern Capitalism and have blinded ourselves with somebody else's science. It is a sad reflection that, so threadbare do we consider our objective, we perforce seek to justify our political existence by laying on the misery thicker and heavier. In all this, never one word about the thing we desire. Never does it sound inviting or attractive; in fact, it appears that some of us deplore the idea that our Socialism is desirable—instead it must be *necessary*. And yet it is essential that what we propose is desirable.

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Why is it necessary for propagandists to con-

tinue to deliver a criticism of the present system to the exclusion of putting the case for and about Socialism? Could it be that we consider our desires are "personal" and anything that touches upon our desires is purely emotional and therefore "unscientific"?

Surely we must consider what ingredients go to make a man. The emotions are part and parcel of the whole, and propertied society has done much to make man withdraw into himself. Today the show of emotion is a sign of weakness; it is the chink in our armour whereby our adversaries may gain advantage over us. It is the outcome of society with a property basis.

The acquisition of property overrides all other considerations, even those of our so-called "private lives," a phrase which is commonly used but rarely dissected and investigated. We understand that "private lives" have nothing to do with the outside world, yet we insist that all production and what springs from it is social and on a world-wide scale—so that in reality we are trying to proceed on what may excusably be called a "popular misconception." On the one hand we advocate a free society, and on the other we participate in actions which mean the continuance of class society. *We advocate Socialism and prosecute the class struggle*—a position which is at the same time difficult because it is contradictory and impossible because it is two positions.

We, who are opposed to the enormous breach

in society, try to put an end to it by coming down on one particular side—the working class side. This is as much a barrier to the propagation of socialist ideas as the ideas of the lordly ones, "our masters." Both the working class and the capitalist class are the bane of the socialist. Since we are out to abolish both economic categories, why support either? We want Socialism. Why do we not get up on the platform and explain this? Because it is "unscientific"? What utter nonsense! We are agreed that Socialism is desirable. What on earth prevents us from saying what it is we think desirable?

Moreover, what prevents us from getting down to the task of formulating what we consider Socialism will be like? Too much like hard work? Maybe, but that is the task that is incumbent upon us—after all, we are the people who want it. It is well past the time when questions such as "Why don't you co-operate with the Communist Party (Labour Party)?" should no longer be put to the platform. It is undeniably clear that our attitude to our own personal position in regard to propaganda inspires this question; predominantly we are in the state which dictates that as workers we put our own problems first and consideration of Socialism second. As socialists we are, and must be, opposed to the class struggle, no matter what our status in society is. To attempt to prosecute it through socialist propaganda will be fatal to the spread of socialist ideas. A.A.N.

IS PARLIAMENT AN INSTRUMENT OF EMANCIPATION?

What should be the Party's attitude towards the ballot box? Is it necessary for a socialist majority to capture the machinery of government in order to achieve the social revolution? Is our attitude in line with Marx, Engels, Morris and the other pioneers of socialist thought?

During the last hundred or so years, working men and women have spent much time and energy discussing the pros and cons of the ballot, universal suffrage and Parliament as a means of emancipation. During the early and middle part of the last century, socialist pioneers—both utopian and scientific—do not seem to have given much thought to the subject. But non- and anti-socialists had for some time stated their views on whether the working class should participate in elections and stand for Parliament.

In this country, as early as 1837, the London Working Men's Association put forward a

6-point "People's Charter," which included Universal Manhood Suffrage (1), Vote by Ballot (3), Payment to Members (4) and Abolition of Property Qualifications (5). The Chartist Movement sent three petitions to the House of Commons (1839, 1842 and 1848). Although it was not until many years after that the workers achieved complete adult franchise, the Chartist Movement kept the idea of the ballot and Parliament to the fore in working class politics.

Regardless of the correctness or incorrectness of gaining control of Parliament, the workers of this country have had during the last hundred years a tremendous fight for the right of expressing themselves through the ballot. To say, as do the Anarchists, that the ballot and the right to send workers' representatives to Parliament is only a "bourgeois institution" is a complete travesty of the facts. That it is now

part and parcel of Capitalism no one denies—at least in this country.

MARX AND ENGELS

In his introduction to Marx's "Class Struggles in France," and, to a lesser extent, in "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," Engels puts clearly his attitude on the subject.

After admitting that he and Marx were under the spell of the French bourgeois revolution of 1789, and that they considered that the methods of social revolution by the proletariat would be similar in 1848 and after, Engels says that history proved them wrong—that the views they held at the time were an illusion.

"The mode of struggle," he writes, "of 1848 is to-day obsolete from every point of view, and this is a point which deserves closer examination." The days of the barricade, of street fighting, were over. The power of the bourgeois state became greater with the development of Capitalism. The workers, armed with stones, sticks and small arms, were powerless against the police and the military.

Engels also saw that a socialist system of society based on harmony and co-operative planning could not be established by these methods. In the "Communist Manifesto," Marx and Engels pointed out that "all previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interests of minorities," whereas "the proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the majority, in the interest of the immense majority." But they did not at the time take this anti-Blanquist, anti-leadership idea to its logical conclusion—a democratic, non-violent and conscious revolution by the "immense majority." This was left to Engels to develop in his introduction to "Class Struggles in France."

MINORITY AND MAJORITY REVOLUTIONS

In this introduction, the Leninist and Trotskyist arguments of armed insurrection, heavy civil war, and a *coup d'état* during a revolutionary period by a "class-conscious proletarian vanguard" leading the masses, are answered in advance by Engels. He proves to all who care to read it that the ideas of minority action advocated by the various Communist and Anarchist schools of thought are anti-socialist, and do not lead to the emancipation of the workers and society as a whole. He shows that all previous revolutions (before 1848—and we may include up to the present time) resulted in the displacement of one ruling class by another. On every occasion the minority who took power either received the active support of the majority (the workers and peasants) or the masses passively acquiesced in the rule of the revolutionary minority.

"Even where the majority took part, it did so—whether wittingly or not—only in the service of a minority; but because of this, or simply because of the passive, unresisting attitude of the majority, this minority acquired the appearance of being the representative of the whole people." (p. 15.)

Classical examples of this are the English Revolution (1642-1660) with the overthrow of the English feudal aristocracy and the absolute monarchy, and the rise of the bourgeoisie; the French Revolution (1789); the various revolu-

tions in Europe during the last century; the two Russian Revolutions (February and October, 1917); and the Chinese Revolution started by Sun Yat Sen (1911) and completed by Mao Tse Tung (1950). In all cases, by various methods (none of them democratic) one ruling class has been ousted by another; and all these revolutions accepted, without question, the idea of leadership (a) by a class, and (b) of leaders within the class.

Generally, after the overthrow of the old social class and the victory of the new ruling clique, the victorious minority became divided. There was a struggle for power; a Bonapartist reaction set in.

"As a rule, after the first great success, the victorious minority became divided; one half was pleased with what it had gained, the other wanted to go further and put forward new demands which, to a certain extent at least, were also in the real or apparent interests of the great mass of the people. In individual cases these more radical demands were realised, but often only for a moment; the more moderate party again gained the upper hand . . ." (ibid, p. 15.)

PARLIAMENT AND UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

Also in this introduction, Engels says that "we," the "revolutionaries," are thriving (in the German Reichstag) far better on legal methods than on illegal. He points out that in Latin countries the revolutionary workers regarded universal suffrage as a snare, as an instrument of government trickery. We may add that this idea was, and still is, advanced by the Anarchists and Anarcho-syndicalists, who openly admit their support for minority action—action determined by their inability to win over a majority to their point of view.

In an important passage, Engels shows the use that the franchise can be to the working class:

"And if universal suffrage had offered no other advantage than that it allowed us to count our numbers every three years; that by the regularly established, unexpectedly rapid rise in the number of votes it increased in equal measure the workers' certainty of victory and the dismay of their opponents, and so became our best means of propaganda; that it accurately informed us concerning our strength and that of all hostile parties, and thereby provided us with a measure of proportion for our action second to none, safeguarding us from untimely tim-

idity as much as from untimely foolhardiness—if this had been the only advantage we gained from the suffrage, then it would still have been more than enough. But it has done more than this. In election agitation it provided us with a means, second to none, of getting in touch with the mass of the people, where they still stand aloof from us; of forcing all parties to defend their views and actions against our attacks before all the people . . ." (ibid, p. 22.)

and

"With this successful utilisation of universal suffrage, an entirely new mode of proletarian struggle came into force, and this quickly developed further. It was found that the state institutions, in which the rule of the bourgeoisie is organised, offer still further opportunities for the working class to fight these very state institutions." (ibid, p. 23.) In his "Origin of the Family," Engels writes of the ballot thus:

" . . . the possessing class rules directly by means of universal suffrage. As long as the oppressed class—in our case, therefore, the proletariat—is not ripe for its self-liberation, so long will it, in its majority, recognise the existing order of society as the only possible one and remain politically the tail of the capitalist class, its extreme left wing. But in the measure in which it matures towards its self-emancipation, in the same measure it constitutes itself as its own party and votes for its own representatives, not those of the capitalists. Universal suffrage is thus the gauge of the maturity of the working class. *It cannot and never will be anything more in the modern state;* but that is enough. On the day when the thermometer of universal suffrage shows boiling-point among the workers, they as well as the capitalists will know where they stand." (p. 197-8.)

To sum up Engels' position, we can say that he insisted that the working class must emancipate itself; that the socialist revolution must be a majority revolution; that universal suffrage, far from being a snare, a "bourgeois institution," is the only means of gauging the socialist maturity of the working class. But, at the same time, he points out that the ballot will never be anything more. Although he thinks that, at certain times, contesting Parliament is good propaganda, and that socialist representatives in Parliament have another plank on which to propagate their ideas, he does not say that, in order to get control of the state machine and to take over the means of production, it is necessary to capture Parliament.

PETER E. NEWELL
(To be continued.)

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FORUM

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E. Lake, S.P.G.B.

EDITORIAL

With a year and a quarter of publication behind it, *Forum* prepares to go on into yet another year. That most members want it to go on seems fairly clear, despite the occasional manifestations of apathy, and even opposition. With the membership as a whole behind it, *Forum* can overcome any technical difficulties in the coming year, as it has done in the past.

If *Forum* is to cease publication then it won't be because there is no discussion in the Party on topics that are dealt with in its pages: its cessation would mean that the oral discussion would not be committed to paper. We have said before, and we will say again, that the scope of *Forum* has not yet really been touched—not merely the controversial side, but more so the instructive one. By the latter we do not necessarily mean the reproduction of material from other sources, but rather the critical commentary, survey and evaluation of such material in terms of socialist propaganda.

But, of course, it is of little avail to expect members to write freely for *Forum* if the impression (no matter how indefinite) is given that its contributors are "deviationists" taking time out from propagating Socialism. Here we may stress that effort put into *Forum* is not at the expense of other Party activity. If no other factor than mathematics entered into the question, then the critics would be right—one hour spent on *Forum* is not one hour spent on the S.S. But there's more to it than mere mathematics. A greater number of activities (provided they all have relevance to Socialism) doesn't mean less of each but, rather, more, since one has the effect of helping the others.

If *Forum* has not, in the past, been up to our expectations, then let's try to improve it. As socialists, we distinguish ourselves from other critics of Capitalism by proposing a positive alternative. As critics of the literature we publish, we should also be concerned with positive alternatives. After saying "this is not good enough" we must produce that which is better. Or, to put it another way, if some bad records have been played let's not scrap the gramophone—let's get some better records.

SOCIALISM IS NOTHING LIKE CAPITALISM

Perhaps you think this heading is a statement that must be so obvious to readers of *Forum* that it is almost insulting to print it. Nevertheless, working on the assumption that Carnell's ideas (Nov. *Forum*) are not exclusive to Carnell, I think it worth while to comment on them. His whole approach to Socialism, Violence and Authority (and presumably to other aspects of the socialist case) is based on something that the Party has persistently had to clear up in the minds of non-socialists. That fundamental misconception is the one of projecting into the socialist future conditions which are part of Capitalism to-day.

Apparently working from his statement (Oct. *Forum*) that "no one yet has any knowledge of Socialism except . . .", Carnell faces up to the problem of explaining Socialism to non-members. His method is to use as many familiar capitalist landmarks as he can, knocking out some, changing others around a bit, always being careful not to prophesy (except generalities of the "all dwell in abundance" variety)—and painting a picture about as believable as leprechauns and as attractive as leprosy.

"Those forces which society has built up for maintaining the peace," "laxity . . . dealt with by means which already exist," "big drop in the incidence of crime," "Socialist Home Secretary"—what sort of Socialism is this? To me, it sounds like a sort of regurgitated Capitalism. But perhaps Carnell only envisages these things in the early stages of the new society; in which case we are brought to the old problem of means and ends. If the end is an absence of crime, forces for maintaining the peace, etc., and the means are supposed to be the presence of these things, then when do we start work on our end? The fact is that once we have projected Socialism—have got the idea of it, if you like—then we have taken up an extreme position. If "helping to bring Socialism nearer" means anything at all, it means renouncing capitalist ideas and advocating the *whole of what we really want—now*. To the extent that we narrow our vision to the next step, we are spoiling our chances of getting across to the people that Socialism is a potential new society, and not Capitalism without knobs on.

There is another objection to describing Capitalism in terms of the present. Great harm can be done to our case by hedging it round with qualifications and refusing to give up thinking in terms of power. I feel sure that Carnell doesn't really want to act as mentor to erring ex-capitalists, but he gives the impression of being on the look-out to see that others "behave themselves." Also, his approach seems strangely

lacking in social feeling—"anything is right if it saves life," "humane when it can be afforded." These are sentiments which I don't associate with socialists. Perhaps they sound a little too much like "the end justifies the means" of our opportunist opponents.

Carnell seems to be so scared of being called utopian that he concentrates his vision on the initial stages or "lower phase" of Socialism. Yet it is only the "lower phase" which is utopian, since it is an ideal compromise, or bits of Socialism within Capitalism. I would earnestly ask Carnell not to put forward his theories of the change-over as propaganda for Socialism, since they would only invite fruitless discussions about Socialist Home Secretaries, etc.,—and in the process we should lose sight of the nature of our object. Carnell's idea of it may sound more practical to non-socialists than the ideas of other members, but, speaking for myself, it just isn't what I came into the Party for.

S.R.P.

BOUND COPIES

Bound copies of all the first 15 issues of *Forum* (October 1952—December 1953) are now available, price 7/6d. (postage 3d. extra). We must apologise for the somewhat irregular appearance of the pages, since the sizes of the earlier issues were not standardised.

Orders should be sent to the Literature Secretary at Head Office, cash with order, please. A dozen copies will be reserved for our Companion Parties abroad, and for the rest it will be a case of first come, first served.

Separate back numbers are available from Head Office (6d. each, plus 1½d. postage) if you want to replace any missing ones; but don't ask for the first (Oct. 1952) issue—there are none left.

Some members have wanted to write in certain issues but have found that they were too late to do so. They are reminded that the latest date for receipt of contributions is normally the FIRST Tuesday of the preceding month (e.g. Jan 5 for Feb)

SOCIALISM AND VIOLENCE

The following statements were originally circulated by the Executive Committee (1948) following the Party meeting on the subject.

"The view of the E.C. is that these statements may prove useful contributions to any branch discussions which may take place."

Statement A—G. McClatchie.

The accepted view on violence, in the working class movement for the past hundred years or so, has been that violence means the wounding, destruction or intimidation of adversaries by the use of guns, bayonets, truncheons, bombs, dynamite, train-wrecking, or the like.

On the use of violence in the course of establishing Socialism I hold the following views:—

(1) The means must be in harmony with the end. We are out to establish a system in which harmony will prevail; the use of violence to accomplish this end can only result in achieving something other than the end we are after. Russia provides many illustrations in this direction. Violence is bound to corrupt both the users and those upon whom it is used.

(2) One of our main contentions, and one of our most important contributions to socialist theory, is that before Socialism can be achieved the majority of the people must really understand what it signifies and want it. The mass of people always moves as a mass; their understanding progresses at a parallel pace. Socialists are not geniuses or born revolutionists. Here and there, owing to a series of casual circumstances, a few get ahead of the mass understanding, and hence the Party grows by ones and twos. That is all. But all the time the workers as a whole are slowly gaining understanding. One day this understanding will have reached a turning point, and then the workers will come over to our side in a torrent; it will not be a matter of a small or a large majority, but of the working class as a whole. This is the conviction that carries us through the arduous years of struggle and disappointment. How will it be with those who think they are outside the working class movement? As in all previous social movements, those who think they are outside the class immediately concerned cannot escape infection by what is in the air; even some members of the ruling class will be stirred to espouse the new system that is in process of birth. The relatively small number of people that may remain behind will be without the means to do more than impotently rage against the inevitable; the machinery of government will have been taken out of the hands of the ruling class. It is necessary to stress the fact that, while former social movements were movements of minorities in the

interests of minorities, our movement differs from all others in that it is a movement of the great majority in the interest of the whole of society. We have the whole of social progress behind us pushing us on.

(3) When the Party was formed, many questions had not yet been thoroughly thrashed out; it could not be otherwise, and this was one of them. The basic ideas of the Party were sound, but the implications still required the enriching and verification of study, experience and discussion. The Party has accomplished a great deal in this direction since 1904, and this has served to root more firmly its fundamental principles. If the Party had not widened and clarified its outlook it would have become moribund, and its members would have lost the capacity for original thought.

(4) It has been urged that if the capitalists realise that we are not going to use violence to achieve our end they will use it to suppress us, conscious of the fact that we will not retaliate. It is essential to remember that our conquest of power will not take place in circumstances like the present, when the mass of people are still unresponsive to our main ideas, but in circumstances when the mass has absorbed and accepted our ideas. For reasons already set forth, the ruling class could only use violence before they had lost control of the state machine, and the violence they would try to use could only consist of members of the working class organised in the armed forces, workers who were infected with ideas of the time. Obviously the ruling class would only think of using armed forces against us when we had grown powerful, and then it would be too late; social consciousness will have undergone a development that puts such a prospect out of the picture.

(5) It has also been suggested that these are "pacifist" views. This is a mistaken interpretation of "pacifism." "Pacifism" is not a political outlook; it is a moral outlook which its advocates claim is above classes, and which draws its inspiration from religion.

(6) Although I now interpret the last few lines of Clause 6 of the Declaration of Principles somewhat differently from the way the Party did in 1904, I can see no valid reason for changing a single word in them, and I would strenuously oppose any suggestion for doing so.

The ideas expressed here are a point of view; I hope they will be discussed as such without acrimony. My concern is that they shall be discussed. Whether they receive approval or disapproval is not a matter of immediate con-

cern to me; it is sufficient that they shall be thought about.

Statement B—E. Lake.

The nature of Socialism and the means by which it can be established are determined by the conditions of capitalist society.

As the system develops, the political aspect of the class struggle becomes increasingly dominant, expressing itself in the fight for and against the establishment of socialism.

The success of the working class in this conflict depends upon two conditions. First, that there be a majority of class-conscious workers, sufficiently strong not only to overthrow capitalism, but to organise and develop the new society; second, they must gain control of the state machinery.

Hence the statement in our Declaration of Principles to the effect that the working class must organise politically to gain control of the state machinery, including the armed forces, to convert them from an instrument of oppression into an agent of emancipation. The present dispute turns upon the interpretation of this clause.

If we refer back to the brief statement of the case, based upon an acceptance of the class struggle, it is difficult to see how there can be two opinions on this matter among socialists.

A socialist majority in control of the armed forces will use that control to establish socialism, and the manner in which this is accomplished will depend upon conditions prevailing at the time.

Just how the armed force is used will be of secondary importance. The vital thing is that the socialists must secure control of the state machinery and use it to overcome any obstacle or opposition they may encounter.

The mere fact that the socialists have this control may be sufficient to overcome any opposition. On the other hand, it may be necessary to take more positive action, leading to serious consequences to some of the contestants. In either case there would be no difference in principle. The armed force would have been used to compel an opposing minority to accept the decision of the majority. To attempt to draw a distinction in socialist principle between the two brands one as a pacifist.

If the class struggle means anything at all, it means that there will be a considerable section of the capitalist class hostile to the establishment of socialism. What the strength of this

section will be and the way it will express itself we have no means of measuring, and any forecast in this respect must of necessity be very speculative.

Equally unknown are other factors which may influence the course of events. Wars may be in progress or strikes and lock-outs may have disorganised society, to mention only two of many possibilities. It is also reasonable to assume that the reactions of the capitalist class will be affected by the historical and political conditions of their particular country. A land with a long history of civil wars would most probably pass through a more violent upheaval than one with a long period of comparative civil peace and parliamentary government. In an attempt to reduce these unpredictable factors to a negligible quantity we are told that socialism can only be established when practically the

whole of society, including the capitalist class, are in agreement for this change. We are also told that the movement will not gradually gain strength, but that there will be a sudden landslide in favour of socialism, carrying with it practically the whole of society. This may or may not be true, but in any case it is a pure assumption and no evidence has been advanced which supports it.

Although the level of understanding is slowly rising, we must recognise that this understanding is by no means uniform. Large sections of the working class are politically ignorant and reactionary, while others are on the verge of understanding their class position and in sympathy with the movement. Between the two extremes there are many levels of understanding or the lack of it.

The capitalist class are also included in this

most remarkable landslide in favour of socialism. Again we look in vain for some evidence to support this statement, the logic of which is the repudiation of the class struggle.

Starting with the assertion that the socialists can on no account use the armed forces against their opponents, our prophets are then driven to eliminate the class struggle in order to bring the exploiters of labour in as supporters of socialism. By this means, apparently, they expect the capitalist class to march to their doom, if not with joy, then in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity.

There is, however, a serious side to this business: the attempt to give a pacifist interpretation to the Declaration of Principles can do much harm and it is up to the members to deal with this matter at the earliest opportunity.

THE PAPER DREAM CITY

"What is called the 'growth' of the metropolis is in fact the constant recruitment of a proletariat capable of existing in an environment without natural or cultural resources; people who do without pure air, who do without sound sleep, who do without a cheerful garden or playing space, who do without free motion, spontaneous play, or a robust sexual life. If you wish for a touch of nature in these 'do without' areas, you must travel in a crowded train to the outskirts of the city. Lacking the means to get out, you succumb: chronic starvation produces lack of appetite. Eventually you may live and die without even recognising the loss . . .

"The Town Dweller lives, not in a real world, but in a shadow world projected around him at every moment by means of paper and celluloid: a world in which he is insulated by glass, rubber, cellophane, from the mortifications of living.

The swish and crackle of paper is the underlying sound of the metropolis. All the major activities are directly connected with paper; and printing and packaging are among its principal industries. The activities pursued in the offices of the metropolis are directly connected with paper: the tabulating machines, the journals, the ledgers, the card-catalogues, the deeds, the contracts, the mortgages; so, too, the prospectus, the advertisement, the magazine, the newspaper. The White Plague, a ravaging flood of paper. As the day's routine proceeds the pile of paper mounts higher: the thrashbaskets are filled and emptied, and filled again. The ticker-tape exudes its quotations of stocks and its reports of news; the students in the schools and Universities fill their notebooks, digest and disgorge the contents of books, as the silkworm feeds on

mulberry leaves and manufactures its cocoon, unravelling themselves on examination day. Buildings rise recklessly, often in disregard of ultimate profits, in order to provide an excuse for paper capitalisations and paper rents. In the theatre, in literature, in music, in business, reputations are made—on paper. The scholar with his degrees and publications, the actress with her newspaper clippings and the financier with his shares and voting proxies, measure their power and importance by the amount of paper they can command. No wonder the anarchists once invented the grim phrase 'Incinerate the documents!'

"This metropolitan world, then, is a world where flesh and blood is less real than paper and ink and celluloid. A world where the great masses of people, unable to have direct contact with more satisfying means of living, take life vicariously, as readers, spectators, passive observers; a world where people watch shadow heroes and heroines in order to forget their own clumsiness or coldness in love, where they behold brutal men crushing out life in a strike riot, a wrestling ring, or a military assault, while they lack the nerve even to resist the petty tyranny of their immediate boss; where they hysterically cheer the flag of their political state, and in their neighbourhood, their trades union, their factory, fail to perform the most elementary duties of citizenship.

" . . . The acceptance of a day that includes no glimpse of the sun, no taste of the wind, no smell of earth or growing things, no free play of the muscles, no spontaneous pleasure not planned for a week in advance and recorded on a memorandum pad . . .

"For lack of conscious plan, the empire of muddle arose: a maximum opportunity for social conflict and cross-purposes and duplication of effort and a minimum means of achieving collective order . . ."

—From "The Culture of the Cities," by Lewis Mumford.

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editors,
Comrades,

In my view, the reason for the party's failure to become a powerful political influence here and abroad is that no determined, large-scale publicity campaign by modern methods has been carried out. For an organisation claiming to have mastered those ideas essential to the survival of human society, we must count this staggering omission as our gravest, most irresponsible error.

What must be done? Branches and members should demand of the E.C. that a national publicity campaign on modern lines be prepared, to commence as soon as the efficient organisation of it can be ensured.

The execution of this proposal will require a considerable sum of money and therefore it will be necessary to sell that exacting seducer of honest socialists, "Our Shining Citadel." It should be possible with the success of this plan to reorganise the party's activities on the basis of a much larger membership. Failure to carry out this simple, direct step means the continuance of socialists as political incompetents.

Yours fraternally,
ROGER.

PROBLEMS OF PROPAGANDA

2 — *The Spoken Word*

Outdoor meetings and personal contact are the two outstanding ways in which people first come to hear the socialist case. It is important, therefore, that members should always be studying the techniques involved, with a view to their improvement. Cox (Sept. *Forum*) has shown that speakers' test graduates are not the same as active speakers—and perhaps has made it a little easier to debunk a more general proposition. It is not true that one speaker can put the Party case as well as another. Some speakers are better than others. And they are better because (unlike their less able comrades) they are always concerned with improving themselves as speakers, with correcting the faults in themselves as well as in their audiences.

Some members seem to think that the Party should act on the principle that one speaker is as good as another. "Fair shares of Hyde Park for all" seems to be their motto. Yet really the question has nothing to do with democracy or equal opportunity. To speak on behalf of the Party one is not merely required to be willing to do so. One must justify one's appointment, or place on the rota, by *achieving results* for the Party. And there are objective standards by which these results may be measured against those of other speakers.

All speakers on the outdoor platform are obliged to ask themselves certain questions: "What sort of people am I speaking to? Should I assume that they are interested in Socialism, that they have false ideas which I must clear away, or that they will appreciate a stinging indictment of Capitalism?" The way they answer these questions determines the way they approach their audiences.

It is sometimes said that because most people do not hold socialist ideas therefore we ought to address our audiences as though they were hostile to our case. This is a colossal blunder. Hostility breeds hostility. Our approach should always assume that if we explain our ideas clearly to people then they will see them as we do. Then the discussion will be on an explanatory rather than a declamatory level. Instead of it being a case of the platform v. the audience, the platform will be more likely to carry the support of the audience in dealing with the objector.

* * *

Personal contact is more difficult to analyse, yet its study is of vital importance to the Party at its present stage, when a large proportion of members are introduced by friends in the Party. Individual, face-to-face presentation of propaganda is more effective than if the same argu-

ments are presented to the subject when he is merely one member of a large audience listening to a speaker. That is why it is such a pity to hear members say "I never try to talk about Socialism to my friends or family." One suspects that what they really mean is that they never try to run a propaganda meeting in miniature. Perhaps they have tried to do so and have found it a dead loss.

The forceful, hectoring, sharp-tongued and lecturing techniques that may be appropriate to the platform are out of place in the face-to-face discussion. Other, subtler methods are called for. Small advances in understanding are better than an all-out attack designed to overwhelm the "enemy" by successive waves of socialist ideas.

To mix the metaphor slightly, some of us have become so proficient in storming the fort that we haven't a clue about what to do when the garrison is considering surrender. Having convinced ourselves that we have nothing positive to say about Socialism, we rely upon attacking other ideas—forgetting that there usually comes a time when our inquirer says "O.K., I agree Capitalism is bad. Now tell me what you propose to take its place." Our speaker, embarrassed at having such a delicate subject as the Party's object discussed in public, says "Common ownership, etc." Pressed for more details, he replies with something about the people deciding at the time. Instead of serving to organise and direct effort—something having a meaning *now*—this lifeless concept of Socialism operates as a compensatory dream, incapable of being transmitted to others except as a dream.

We should remember that, generally speaking, positive suggestion is better than negative. "Thou shalt" is more compelling than "Thou shalt not." It is seldom wise for a speaker to open up on what Socialism is not, or to volunteer to state the arguments of the opposition. This only plants in the minds of the audience competing and negative ideas which they must overcome before they accept Socialism. Put your positive case—and then let your opponents put theirs in their own words.

* * *

One of the first tasks of the propagandist is to find the common ground that he and his audiences share—to minimise disagreements and to emphasise the area of agreement. If the speaker gives the impression of a feeling of superiority, the audience will react unfavourably; if he is less than scrupulously fair to the opposition, his motives will be questioned; but if he strikes a true common ground and genuinely develops his arguments in terms of it, he will win agreement.

Here I would stress *in terms of it*. Never copy the mob-leader's device of appearing as "just one of the boys." No SPGB speaker is obliged to identify himself with any group. Horny-handed sons of toil don't make socialists any better or worse than wide boys do—provided they are both equally good propagandists. Let the subject matter establish the common ground, and not the personal attributes of the speaker.

As far as the speaker himself is concerned, he should always relish his work and never look upon it as a duty. If he can't interest himself it is certain that he won't interest his audience. It is helpful to vary the material as much as possible, to dramatise or "spice it up a bit." Finally, it is to be hoped that Cox was mistaken when he suggested that we can only hope to keep the Party propaganda ticking over until "the next crisis, i.e. mass unemployment." Our speakers must be singularly inept if they feel handicapped because Capitalism is not bad enough yet.

S.R.P.

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